

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3929

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, JM
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH MINISTER BELL ON PHILLIP AGEE

1. SUMMARY: IN SEPTEMBER 15 MEETING WITH MINISTER OF UTILITIES AND TRANSPORT BELL, I DELIVERED STRONG INFORMAL PROTEST OVER VISIT OF PHILIP AGEE AND JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT'S PARTICIPATION THEREIN. BELL EXPRESSED CANDID VIEW THAT AGEE VISIT WAS VERY HELPFUL TO PNP ELECTION CAMPAIGN. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT U.S.-JAMAICAN BALANCE SHEET IS IN NEED OF REVIEW AND HE UNDERTOOK TO RAISE MATTER WITH MANLEY. END SUMMARY.

2. USING THE OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED BY THE CAB CONSIDERATION OF AMERICAN AIRLINES NEWYORK-JAMAICA ROUTE APPLICATION, I SCHEDULED A MEETING WITH MINISTER OF PUBLIC UTILITIES AND TRANSPORT BELL SEPTEMBER 15 WITH THE PURPOSE OF PUTTING FORWARD MY VIEWS ON PHILIP AGEE'S CURRENT VISIT TO JAMAICA. I CHOSE BELL AS THE RECIPIENT OF THIS DEMARCHE BECAUSE OF OUR CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONS AND BECAUSE OF THE CONSISTENTLY EVEN-HANDED MANNER IN WHICH HE HAS
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HANDLED MATTERS OF BILATERAL CONCERN.

3. AFTER A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF THE AIR ROUTE MATTER (REPORTED SEPTTEL), I TOLD BELL I WISHED TO EXPRESS TO HIM MY VERY STRONG CONCERN OVER THE FACT THAT "A KNOWN TRAITOR TO THE UNITED STATES" WAS BEING ALLOWED TO VISIT JAMAICA, WITH FULL GOVERNMENT SANCTION AND EVEN COLLABORATION; THAT HE WAS BEING GIVEN WIDESPREAD COVERAGE BY THE PNP CONTROLLED PRESS, THE GOJ INFORMATION AGENCY (API), AND THAT HIS STATEMENTS AND ALLEGATIONS WERE BEING AIRED EXTENSIVELY OVER GOVERNMENT RADIO AND TELEVISION. I POINTED TO THE FACT THAT AGEE HAD SPOKEN TO ONE MEETING WHERE HUGH SMALL (PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY) WAS A PROMINENT GUEST, AND IN WHICH SMALL, BY ONE NEWS ACCOUNT, TOOK OVER WHEN THERE WAS AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A BOMB THREAT. I ALSO HAD EVEN BEEN GIVEN REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AGEE HAD BEEN A GUEST SPEAKER AT A MEETING HELD BY THE PRIME MINISTER. I CONTRASTED THE DE FACTO SITUATION WITH THE QUIESCENT ASSURANCES ON THE "DESTABILIZATION" CAMPAIGN WHICH HAD ONLY LAST WEEK BEEN GIVEN ME BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, DUDLEY THOMPSON. I EXPRESSED MY EXTREME UNHAPPINESS AT BEING THE OBJECT OF SUCH DISINGENUOUS GAMES.

4. BELL APPEARED SOMEWHAT TAKEN BACK AND GENUINELY SOBERED BY MY VIEWS. WITH GREAT CARE AND CONSIDERABLE CANDOR HE RECOUNTED THE FACT THAT THE DESTABILIZATION CHARGES HAD ORIGINATED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PNP EARLIER THIS YEAR. HE SAID THAT THE SITUATION MUST BE VIEWED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF JAMAICA'S FORTHCOMING ELECTION. HE SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S ORIGINAL CHARGES OF DESTABILIZATION HAD BEEN ACCEPTED AT FACE VALUE BY THE MAJORITY OF THE JAMAICAN PEOPLE BUT THAT A SIGNIFICANT MINORITY HAD REJECTED THE CHARGES OUT OF HAND. IN THIS SITUATION THE ARRIVAL OF AGEE WAS, AS SEEN FROM THAT PERSPECTIVE, TOO GOOD TO BE BELIEVED. HERE WAS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR

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DEMONSTRABLE PROOF THAT THE PNP GOVERNMENT ALLEGATION HAD BEEN, IN FACT, WELL FOUNDED. "SPEAKING AS A POLITICAN", HE SAID, "THE ARRIVAL OF AGEE WAS PROBABLY TOO CONVENIENT AND BENEFICIAL TO BE EASILY TURNED OFF. WITHIN THE JAMAICAN ELECTION CONTEXT IT WAS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THIS MUCH. AT BEST, THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO SHOW ITS RESTRAINT BY NOT SPEAKING PUBLICLY TO THE ISSUE."

5. BELL STATED FLATLY THAT THE VISIT BY AGEE HAD BEEN PUT TO THE CABINET AS A PRIVATE VISIT SPONSORED BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL. HE GAVE HIS ASSURANCES THAT HE DID NOT KNOW OTHERWISE THOUGH HE ALSO CAUTIONED THAT HE HAD BEEN ABSENT TWO WEEKS IN AUGUST. WHEN THE CONNECTION THROUGH SMALL WAS POINTED OUT HE REITERATED THAT, "AS FAR AS HE PERSONALLY KNEW," AGEE WAS INVITED PRIVATELY. HE CONCEDED THAT SOME OF THE REMARKS MADE BY AGEE MIGHT WELL HAVE FALLEN UNDER THE RESTRICTIVE PROHIBITIONS COVERED UNDER SECTION 15 OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY ACT.

6. BELL DELIVERED A LONG ANALYSIS OF THE BENEFITS OF THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, AND ASSURED ME OF HIS BELIEF, AND THAT OF THE MAJORITY OF HIS COLLEAGUES, THAT IT WAS IN JAMAICA'S INTEREST TO MAINTAIN A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. HE POINTED TO THE CHILDISH TENDENCY TO "TWEAK THE LION'S TAIL", ETC. I EXPRESSED TO HIM MY VIEW THAT THE U.S. COULD NOT LOOK VERY FAVORABLY ON A GOVERNMENT THAT PERPETUATED ITSELF IN POWER ON A PLATFORM FILLED WITH ALLEGATIONS OF U.S. MISDEEDS.

7. BELL SAID THAT IT WAS HIS VIEW THAT JAMAICA SHOULD NOW LOOK AT THE BALANCE SHEET. HE AGREED THAT THE "CLIMATE" BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD BEEN NEGATIVE AND THAT THERE WERE NOW SERIOUS NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES AS A RESULT OF THIS CLIMATE. HE POINTED OUT THAT THIS HAS ALREADY BEEN MENTIONED BY THOSE IN THE TOURIST INDUSTRY. HE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT HE WANTED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES AND THEN APPROACH

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THE PRIME MINISTER ON IT, NOT AS A POINT OF CONTENTION, BUT AS AN ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE US-JAMAICA BALANCE SHEET.

8. COMMENT: BELL IS A PRAGMATIST AND I BELIEVE HE SEES IN OUR NEGATIVE REACTION SOMETHING TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT. HE IS PROBABLY OUR BEST HOPE FOR GETTING A LEVEL-HEADED APPROACH TO THE DESTABILIZATION QUESTION IN THIS GOVERNMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, WITH FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, MANLEY'S OWN OBSESSION ON THE ISSUE, AND AN ALMOST IRREVERSIBLY POISONED PUBLIC CLIMATE, MY EXPECTATIONS ARE LOW.

GERARD

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